

**WEST POINT ROUGH RIDERS.**CLIMAX OF EXHIBITIONS AT THE  
MILITARY ACADEMY.During Feats of Horsemanship by Cadets  
That Made Spectators Hold  
Their Breath.

WEST POINT, June 12.—Comparatively few people ever get a chance to see the West Point cadets ride, except in their light artillery practice, which consists of little more than pell-mell galloping even at its most exciting stage. In point of fact, the West Point cadet is not associated in the public mind with horseback work. He is known to most people as the ideal type of infantry soldier, moving with clock-like precision and marching with absolute perfection of carriage and swing. It is only remotely and by hearsay that the public at large knows that he can ride well. It would be a revelation to most people to know that he can ride with a dash and daring that would win the reverent admiration of a cowboy, and that he can perform feats on horseback which would make a Wild West show or a circus seem like a horserace at a country fair by comparison. How he ever gets through the four years of the academy course without breaking his neck is the marvel to the chosen few who get a chance once a year at graduation to see his exploits in the academy. That he must get some pretty bad falls and no end of jars and bruises before he attains such perfection you know must be inevitable. In fact, he does come in for an allowance of bruises and miscellaneous hurts much greater than is ever known outside the academy. But learning to despise such trifles and learning, too, to be in tight corners where escape from serious hurt depends upon his own nerve and skill, is part of his soldier's training.

It is in the riding school that this part of their education is attended to, and it is attended with the same thoroughness which marks everything else that is done at the West Point Academy. Nobody who saw the surprising exhibition of daring and dexterity in the riding hall this afternoon will ever doubt this assertion. It was such an exhibition as is not seen elsewhere—man here, and which more than once tested the ability of the spectators to look on at dangerous feats almost as it tested the nerve of the men themselves to do them.

It was an interesting feature of the show to note the way some of the more thrilling events moved the spectators in the galleries that lined the great barn-like interior, with its thick carpet of beautifully leveled tan bark. Such things affect people in unexpected ways. For instance, one man with about as little trace of weakness in his

face as there was, say in the face of General Phil Sheridan, left before the exhibition was half over, frankly admitting that he had seen all he could stand and did not want to hold his breath any longer in the momentary dread that some one of those splendid young fellows was going to get his neck broken. A party of three women on the other hand looked down on it all with as much composure as they would have looked at the pretty dress parade spectacle on the green every evening. The only effect that one or two of the crises had, when for an instant a gallant young fellow was down on his feet in the whirling on rush of galloping horses, was to make them laugh. It seemed to strike them that it was immensely funny to see him in apparent danger of being trampled to death. Perhaps they had seen it all before and knew that the danger was a shade or two more apparent than real. But with those who saw it for the first time the impression made was different, and there was more than one sigh of relief when the last flying leap from galloping horse to galloping horse was over and nobody was killed or even so much as scratched.

There were 16 cadets in the first squadron and 16 in the second. They each had the floor of the riding hall in turn, and while the two did the best it is not for a layman to say, for each was so marvellously good. It did not surprise anybody to see the alignment of cadets on horseback kept almost as perfect in the routine drill maneuvers as the alignment of cadets doing similar evolutions on the parade ground, for the people here get callous to perfection of that kind and hardly take into account the enormous patience and work it represents.

But it was when the purely military movements were over and the rough riding exploits took their place that the marvel of the thing took hold of the people. Here you saw hurdle jumping, with one person following so closely upon the heels of another that it made your hair raise to think of the hideous piling up of riders and horses that would follow should some one well in advance come down with a crash. The hurdles were so close together that in several instances horses took two of them at a leap, kicking over the last one and leaving the wild, rushing mass behind to clear the tangle as best they could. Once a horse did halt at the task, sending his rider high upon his neck, as at the last moment he refused to take the 5-foot hedge before him.

But mere hurdles were tame for the cadets. It was only when they took them bareback and with arms folded that they seemed to find much excitement in the sport. It was when the riders leaped to the ground just as the hurdle was reached and then went flying back to his seat again as the animal rose to the leap that the excitement of the spectators began in earnest. Then came flying leaps to the ground and vaulting over two horses and landing safely on the back of a third horse, all galloping abreast, with other trios of horses rushing furiously

upon their heels. The horses were now in a lather of sweat, and their tracks as slippery as though they had been greased. Several times riders who landed otherwise than squarely astraddle were unable to hold their seats and went down in the galloping and disappeared, but only to show up out of the mess somewhere and get back to the slippery seat. It was not enough that they land right side up and facing front. Then came a short, sharp order from the officer in command. Then the flying leaps included a twist in mid-air, which brought the cadet down on his horse facing to the rear, and with nothing to cling to and only the tight grip of his legs to hold him there.

And through it all, in spite of the cramped quarters and the galloping confusion of it all, there was the old cadet military regularity which only needed the fraction of a second to resolve itself in almost the alignment of the regular horsemanship drill. It was magnificent, and if it was not war, it was better than any circus you might see in a lifetime, and it was a new revelation to most people of just how strenuous the training of a West Point cadet really is. At times the audience broke out with enthusiastic applause at some particularly long and graceful leap from a galloping horse to the ground and back again to the slippery seat, but for the most part this feature of the exhibition was altogether so thrilling and exciting that people forgot to applaud because they were too busy holding their breath. It was the end and climax of the week's academy exhibitions and was noted by all who saw it to be the most surprising illustrations of what cadet life here means of any that have been seen.

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